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ARNE GARBORG¹

In a general way, Garborg reflects the tendency of his time towards criticism of existing conditions; but the individual note in his works is very strong, and in his ultimate conclusions he differs widely from most Norwegian authors of his day. The central problem for him is religion. It forms, in a way, the theme of his first larger work, *Ein Fritenkjar* (A Free Thinker) 1878, which first appeared in *Fedraheimen*, a weekly which Garborg had founded in 1877. The author himself makes the following comment: "This story is dealing with the time when the last great combat over faith was waged up here; and whatever else may be said of it, it bears evidence that he who wrote it himself had taken part in the conflict." What Garborg here expressly states, is certainly even more true of several other works from his pen. The reader of Garborg very soon becomes convinced that the author almost exclusively depicts observations and experiences of his own, characters from real life. But his experiences were for the most part of a concrete nature, and not of such a subjective character as for instance the inner experience of Ibsen which led to the production of *Brand*. It is probably from this reason that several of Garborg's characters re-appear in a number of his works.

¹ This study is based on the edition of Garborg's works which appeared in 1908. (Arne Garborg, *Skrifter i Samling*, Kristiania, 1908-9.) It contains, in the *landsmaal*, Garborg's poetic works, the *Ferdabrev*, *Kolboinbrev*, *Knudaheibrev* and *Brev um Finneferdi* 1905, but not his various polemic tracts. In the latter, he dealt primarily with the *landsmaal* question, though in a number of them, he also discussed other social and political problems. Articles of this kind are always of a more or less ephemeral and chiefly local importance, and so it seems permissible to omit them here from consideration. The chief reason for the omission is, however, the great difficulty of obtaining access to the tracts in question.

In a number of instances, utterances have been quoted which Garborg puts into the mouths of his characters. The views so expressed are, however, in full accord with direct statements of Garborg, made on other occasions.

Ein Fritenkjar is not at all a polemic, as one might expect; the work primarily depicts the fate of a number of individuals. The question whether or not even an infidel is entitled to freedom of conscience, convictions and the right of utterance is not answered, but we may be assured that Garborg would very strongly affirm it. We know by his own utterances that at the time when the story was written, or, at any rate, a few years previous, he stood on the side of free thought, and for this sole reason could not accept the financial assistance which he so badly needed on the supposition that he should study for the ministry. It is therefore but natural that in his presentation, though it is free from exaggeration, light and shade are distributed somewhat unevenly.

The hero, Eystein Hauk, is a lofty, unbending idealist, who firmly adheres to his convictions, even where they conflict with his deepest affection and ruin his happiness. Like most people who in their lives are governed by theories, he does not spare others any more than himself, and is exceedingly one-sided. But in spite of all the sympathy one experiences for Ragna, Hauk's wife, who is crushed in the conflict, the feeling of the impartial reader for Eystein Hauk is more one of pity than of condemnation. Only when it is too late, does Hauk repent of his short-sighted course, which has really brought to pass what he most of all desired to prevent. Then it also dawns upon him that convictions are only something relative and that it is perhaps unwise to steer too unbending a course.

"My whole life spoiled; my happiness and my endeavors ruined; and I myself too, and several others with me; and my son—completely ensnared by the forces to the combating of which I consecrated my life.

"I was too insistent upon principles; I was a doctrinary. I should have proceeded more cautiously and more slowly; I ought to have been 'practical.' I might have had the boy baptized. Things could have run smoothly and nicely; and I should have found happiness and a chance to work for my ideas.—

"But it would have been a lie?

"Oh yes, all sagacity is lies. All men are liars. They can't help it. Society is still barbarous; society must take the blame.

"Here in this country, thought is free, as free as a bird; but one must always see to it that one arrives just at the conclusions which have been established aforehand as the only right and true ones. 'You shall have your own free will, my daughter, but may the deuce take me, if you don't become Madam Østmo!!—Thoughts are free, oh yes, but if one arrives at conclusions that differ from the accepted ones, he is outlawed;—and an outlawed man gets along as best he can."

Shortly before his end, Hauk declares: "Give me back my youth and Ragna and I shall believe whatever you wish. . . at any rate, act as if I believed it." But it is just his unflinching devotion to the plain truth, his intellectual honesty, his inability to dissemble, which make Hauk such an admirable character, in spite of all his faults.

The author introduces only one other representative from the camp of the rebels, "candidate"² Breide, who with his cynicism and inconsistency makes a far less favorable impression than Hauk. Among the opponents there are but few figures which win our sympathy. The most lovable is pastor Vangen, Ragna's father, whose greatest shortcoming consists in the narrowness of his horizon. Other members of the clergy, who figure in this story, make a very unfavorable impression, especially the fanatic Balle and Eystein Hauk's own son, another of the same ilk, who does not hesitate to declare at the grave of his father that the latter surely has gone to perdition.

When Hauk, in a strenuous effort to regain the simple faith of his childhood, goes to attend a church service, he has the misfortune to strike a preacher who is little more than a phonograph, and the congregation is described as a herd of weaklings and degenerates, "a collection fit for a hospital," who have come to church to seek forgetfulness and a sort of intoxication. One of the characters of the story, the bailiff

² *Kandidat*, one who has passed the state examination in a certain field. It is not possible to render some of the Norse terms fully satisfactorily in English. *Lensmann*, *Fut*, even *Bonde*, etc., have no exact English equivalents.

(*Fut*), is a sceptic and a scoffer, and does not even succeed in keeping up appearances when a guest in Vangen's house. But he stoutly defends the need of christianity, in as much as it is the very foundation of his own authority; and so, of course, he is finally laid to rest under a stone bearing the inscription: "Be thou faithful unto the end, and thou shalt be given the crown of life."

Illustrations of this kind could be multiplied, and there can be no dispute over the fact that the representatives of the clergy and the adherents of the church in this narrative appear in a very disadvantageous light; the sympathies of the author seem to have been entirely on the side of the infidel and outcast. Garborg in his works has not reverted at length to the problem of free thought, though in some of his latest *Læraren* and *Heimkomin Son* (The Teacher and The Son come home) he introduces in the *Lensmann*, Jens Eide, a free thinker, who proves to be a man of sterling qualities and the staunch, unselfish friend of his deeply religious brother-in-law.

Representatives of the clergy are to be found in Garborg's novels and stories repeatedly, and they often appear in a damaging light. In the sketch *Hemn* (Revenge), for instance, a country parson is depicted who, partly for the sake of gain, and partly from fear of the bride's father, marries a couple, though the bride clearly and distinctly answers "no"; and in *Seld til den Vonde* (Sold to the Evil One), we have a fanatic who, deeply imbued with religious superstitions, proceeds to perform with fear and trembling the rites of exorcism, apparently with as much conviction as the most hide bound monk of the middle ages. That he exacts a high pecuniary reward for his services seems less reprehensible, since the money goes to the church rather than into his own pocket.—It is hardly a tribute to the clergy when a practical businessman remarks of a bishop engaged in the political game: "Oh, he is a clergyman, he is on to the ropes." And a journalist confesses: "As seldom as we discover an able politician among the members of the legal profession, as frequently one finds a very pronounced talent for politics among the clergy. One is almost tempted to say that the church is the kingdom of this world *par excellence*."

The essence of Garborg's criticism is that the clergymen, as state officials, place the interests of the state and society above true christianity, that they are intolerant, reactionary and worldly wise. A pastor of this type is represented in *Hjaa ho Mor* (She who stayed with Mother). In one of the *Knudshreibrev* of the year 1902, we read: "We must indeed be glad as long as the state does not persecute people for their faith. Hans Nielsen Hauge was the last one here in this country who suffered for his faith, that is: outright. And yet, one can hardly claim that it was his faith for which he suffered; if they were after him, it was for the sake of regularity in church affairs. It was not a question of faith; the dispute was over who should preach and interpret it. The clergy of the state church was of the opinion that only those should preach whom the state had appointed for this purpose; for they had been brought up and instructed in the faith which the state wanted; and what else could one rely upon? That they imprisoned Hauge, who thought himself a messenger of Christ without being so appointed by the state, was a matter of course, against which no adherent of the state church can have anything to say.

"The state church manages all in the best possible manner. It preaches the official faith according to the written code and is a clearing house for marriage, baptism, burial and other church business (*Kyrkjelige Forretninger*). All should then go well. The kingdom of God and the temporal kingdom have in the state church found each other.

"But the people don't believe it. The people fall back upon the utterance that God's kingdom and the kingdom of this world are opposed to each other. And when they keep company, it is because the church has submitted to the world. It is the humble and little respected, those who suffer and in whom no one is concerned, unless it is a question of taxes and burdens, those are the ones who belong to the kingdom of Christ; therefore they must suffer in this world."

Of the institutions and customs of the church, Garborg rejects infant baptism. In *Ein Fritenkjar*, he assails it by means of logical arguments, chiefly on the grounds that it is an interference with the right of every individual to freedom of

choice; in *Ungdom* (Youth), he satirizes it. His own child, he has none the less baptized, "so he will escape being baptized later in the penitentiary. . . we live in a free country, you know," he comments ironically. The mother insists that the boy be named Arne after his father, and, of course, gets her way. But less enthusiastic over his name and fame than Hulda, Garborg adds to Arne the name of the first Norse socialist, Olaus Fjørtoft, and chuckles over the fact that the pastor thus is compelled to pronounce blessings upon two names which spell anathema for him.

Confirmation just at the beginning of the period of adolescence, Garborg also desires to see abolished, designating it as a most unreasonable compulsion. The young ones only too often make their vows merely with their lips, and the intelligent and conscientious among them suffer torment, since they are well aware of the fact that their hearts know nothing of the pledges which are exacted from them. That the church, or its servants desecrated the marriage ceremony, Garborg has indicated repeatedly, and in his own case, he confines himself to the civil marriage rites. But marriage as an institution he does not attack, as some charge. To make the author responsible, as has been done, for radical utterances put into the mouths of his characters (*Mannfolk*, *Hjaa ho Mor*), and to ascribe to him personally the views in question, is a very injudicial method of procedure, unless there exists ample supporting evidence in the nature of direct statements from his pen. But even if Garborg in his earlier years had fault to find with the institution of matrimony, he has later made abundant amends. In *Læraren*, Paulus Høve, whose views are largely identical with Garborg's own, as becomes evident from a number of instances where the author expresses himself without the use of any disguise, defines marriage in a very lofty and purely spiritual sense. But the highest tribute to matrimony, Garborg pays in *Heimkomin Son*, where we read: "Married life is seriousness not play and pleasure, affection and deep joy alternating with toil and struggle, and at times with sorrow and loss. But just from these results growth for the parents: in married life, the two halves of mankind become a whole,

become united in a complete human being. And only such a complete human being can gain the greatest riches life has to offer. . . . To marry is to become united with the sum total of existence; through matrimony, one reaches the fulness of life." Of church societies and foreign missions Garborg has no very high opinion. "Christian charity is to help worthy persons in need on the condition that they shall become converted" declares Paul Høve. "Aside from the poor commission this is the most ridiculous aping (*Skalkeherming*) of a christian way of helping the poor that one could invent."

The clergy have first of all far departed from the real teachings of Christ; but worse still, they do not even practice what they preach. In the second part of *Haugtussa, I Helheim*, a preacher is made to confess:

—Ja, han frelste oss
 fraa vaare Skyldur,
 ofra seg,
 at me kunde spara oss,
 forsaka Verdi,
 at me kunde njote Verdi
 og enda smyrja oss med Himil-Von,
 heldt Lovi,
 at me kunde synde,
 var lydig,
 at me kunde vera ulydige,
 elska,
 at me kunde hata,
 gjorde alt
 for oss,
 so no gjer me som me vil,
 og pryder oss med hans Namn,
 og segjer etter hans Ord,
 og sminkar oss med hans Blod,
 dyljande soleis vaar Rotinskap.³

³ Yes, he redeemed us / from our sins, / sacrificed himself, / so that we might spare ourselves, / forsook the world, / so that we could enjoy the world / and yet flatter ourselves with the hope of heaven, / obeyed the law, / so that we could sin, / was obedient, / so that we could disobey, / loved, / that we might hate, / did it all / for us, / and now we do as we please, / and adorn ourselves with his name, / and say up his words, / and paint ourselves with his blood, / hiding thus our rottenness.

But Garborg does not criticise the clergy any more severely than various people in other walks of life, and we find throughout his works clergymen who are true christians and loyal to their duties. Some of Garborg's dearest memories cluster about the country church where he attended as a boy and he eloquently extols the highly beneficial influence of the church in the rural districts. And so we are not surprised that he advises against separation from the Lutheran church. "Many a thing may be said against our temple, too. But the key-stone is the word of Christ; and the interpretation has as much of him as our learned men (*Skriftlærde*: scribes) could attain.

"And we shall not separate from the church. The world is inclined to believe that the separatists are chosen people; and churches and congregations of dissenters come into existence right along. But thus it shall not be among us. In the outer things, we are like the rest. Only in our lives do we distinguish ourselves, when the occasion is given; we let our light shine, so that people may see our good deeds." Without deeds, a man's faith is dead, is Garborg's opinion.

Of the doctrines of the church, he most emphatically rejects the conception of eternal punishment. In his works, especially in *Fred* and *Seld til den Vonde*, we are shown how these teachings become a source of the most horrible torment, for the conscientious far more so than for the confirmed sinners. As late as 1905, Garborg designates these doctrines as the cause of much insanity. "It will be a great improvement when Satan and his hell are finally removed from the public school and the church." The doctrine of hell is perpetuated by those in authority in various places, he believes, because obedience to the law and morality would cease, according to their opinion, if eternal punishment were no longer threatening the offenders. To many, hell is an essential feature of christian teachings, and woe to him who denies its existence. "Paul Høve is the antichrist, he denies the existence of hell. But who, do you think, would listen to the word of God, if there were no hell?" For the masses, hell is, moreover, a consolation since it holds for them the promise and guarantee of ultimate justice. "If the poor did not have hell, into which they can

cast sheriff (*Lensmann*) and bailiff (*Fut*) and the whole litter, we would have more murderers than we could house," declares Jens Eide.—"Jesus allotted salvation to Lazarus, and damnation to the rich man, now-a-days it is just as likely Lazarus who is damned and the rich man who is saved; can that console the people?" Paul Høve objects. But Jens thinks that this does in no wise alter the case. "When the pastor sends the rich man to heaven, the people put little faith in that. They know well enough that Lazarus may enter heaven just as readily, even if the pastor does not deliver a funeral sermon at his grave; to him who suffers much, much is forgiven, the people think. And as long as we cannot change conditions, we must allow the poor this consolation. The views of mankind will become brighter when life becomes more bearable."

And yet, Garborg accords to hell a certain reality, but it does not consist in eternal torment, but in eternal death, i.e. in the extinction of the soul. Lack of character and integrity leads to such annihilation.

Arne Sjelir som tærest burt .
og ikkje sin Røyning held,
dei hadde kje Hugen heile,
som stend i den siste Eld.

Arne Sjelir som tærest burt
og gjeng so reint til Tjon,
det er den andre Dauden;
daa er der kje Botevon.

Det er den største Rædsle,
det er den namnlause Sut;
Daa er dei strokne or alle Bøkar
og or Guds minne ut.⁴

Many souls perish even long before their bodies die.

⁴ Poor souls who wither away / and their trials did not stand, / a whole heart they lacked, / and now are expunged by the flames. / Poor souls who wither away / and go to eternal doom,— / the second death it is indeed / and hope for redemption none. / This is of all the greatest awe, / it is the nameless blight; / here they are stricken from every roll / nay even from God's thought.

Her ser du faae, mi gode Syster;
dei fleste vin ikkje hit.

Dei laga einannan paa Jordi
eit Helvit av Kiv og Kjav,
og tjaaka og tjaada ut einannan
med Skulding og Sjølvhugs Krav.

Dei svidde einannan med Hat og Harm
og Ord som bitande brende;
so aat og øydde den Uhugs Elden,
til dess det paa Sjæli var Ende.

Dei pintest av arge, saare Hjarto,
og øydest Hugnad og Heim;
og daa dei naadde fram aat Gravi,
det var kje meir att av deim.⁵

The second part of *Haugtussa, I Helheim*, represents the existence of the damned souls in hell as a continuation of their earthly lives; their sufferings consist partly in the perpetuation of their enslavement to folly and sin, partly in the consequences of their evil doings. Many of the features of their surroundings, it is interesting to note, are borrowed from Norse mythology rather than from the conceptions of christian theology and art, that is: cold, fogs, torrents and darkness take largely the place of eternal fire. The course of their trials, it would seem, may lead upwards and onwards, when they have atoned for their wrongs.

Dei skuldar andre, dei skuldar Gud
For Syndi som hit deim sende;
fyrr dei Skuldi si eigi finn,
der er ikkje Von um Vende.⁶

⁵ Here you see few, my sister dear, / most do not reach this place. / They create one another in their earthly lives / a hell of haggle and strife, / and fritter and weary each other out / with charges and selfish claims. / They scorch each other with hatred and wrong / and words that cut to the quick; / thus ate and wasted the fire of wrath, / until of souls there was nought. / They were tormented by their evil hearts, / and destroyed their peace and homes; / and when at last their graves they reached, / of souls there was nothing left.

⁶ God they wronged and their fellowmen / by sins that them hither sent; / and ere not their debts in full are paid, / hope for relief there is none.

These are the main features of the more or less negative religious conceptions of Garborg; they are easily out-weighted by his positive ideas, which we shall briefly summarize in the following paragraphs.

One's creed is unimportant; it is something made by man. Faith is essential but it must be a living faith which automatically results in obedience to the teachings of Christ. God is the loving father of all men, not a stern judge. Whether Christ be God or man, is of no importance. The conception that Christ died on the cross to redeem mankind, Garborg regards as an invention of Saint Paul. Christ is our guide, but not our redeemer. In the first place, God, the loving father of all mankind, could not have demanded such a sacrifice; secondly it could not be made available for us, for we must redeem ourselves by our own deeds. We must obey the will of God unconditionally and without fear of consequences. We are able to do so if we only will. In obedience to the promptings of his conscience, Paul Høve sells all he has and gives the money to the poor, since he at the time being considers it God's will that he should act thus. Our religion must permeate our whole lives. But not the luke-warm religion of our day. "We have transformed the original Christ into a gentle prayer-book Christ for the ladies, nay even into a pillar of society, into a padlock for our pantries and safes, into a night-cap for the model citizen; and the gospel of the poor, we have recast into a rampart and stronghold for the mighty in this world! Kings and princes were to persecute us for the sake of Jesus; now Jesus stands guard for these kings and princes. And they feast and fatten themselves in his name, and gamble and whore in his name, and wage war and kill in his name, and they plunder and steal in his name; and Christ's ministers stand stooping until they are doubled up and bless them in his name, and make the doors wide and the portals high for them; and receive rewards and honors and power from them; nay even their holy offices they receive of the mighty ones of this world. And christianity, which was to revolutionize and create anew this world, has become a couch of ease for everybody."

Christianity, as it is taught by the church, is but a petrefaction of the living spirit of Christ. "It signifies always the decline (of a religion) when rules and ordinances for the daily life are made. A christian does not live after rules. He lives after God's own will; without compulsion and dissembling he lives according to his new nature (*Hug*), which is nothing else but his inborn human nature, elevated and cleansed from all base tendencies (*Huldra-Haattar*).

"Life is one continual sacrifice, but these sacrifices become a means of spiritual growth, if we learn to make them willingly and gladly. Our deeds must be our sermons; evil we must overcome with good, alleviate all suffering, regardless of the fact whether the sufferer is deserving or not; it is not for us to judge. We must forsake the evil in the world, but not the world itself; joy is not contrary to the teachings of Christ, and all things beautiful are but memories from paradise, which we shall not reject. It is worship of God to rejoice in his works."

Pietism is harmful when coupled with an ascetic tendency. The injunction that we shall take the flowers of the field and the birds of the air as examples is valid enough, but we must not overlook the fact that these beings of a lower order continually strive to maintain and unfold their lives to the best of their ability. They are models of industry and effort, not of idleness and ease. All desire to rule and govern, to be raised above one's fellowmen is un-Christlike. He who would rule must serve. Referring to Matthew, XX, 25 ff., Paul Høve exclaims: "But such opposites are the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of God.

"The life of this world is strife. Thou shalt love thyself and hate thine enemy, is the fundamental law; great is he who holds his brethren under his tyranny and uses might against them, and the first among them is he who best can rake in and accumulate; the strongest brute is the greatest.

"But God's kingdom is peace. Thou shalt love thine enemy as thou lovest thyself, is the fundamental law here; great is not he who demands, but he who helps and gives; the servant and the serf are great; he serves and toils from love and for his brethren; greatest is he who loves most."—The

objection that society cannot exist on these principles, Paul Høve disposes of very thoroughly and categorically. "Society?" he queries. "I don't understand what concern of mine it is whether society stands or falls. I pray each day in the Lord's Prayer that the kingdom of God may come; and that can exist on communistic principles." But he does not grant that his principles are really communistic, and not without good grounds. "You say communism; but you know, I presume, that communism and christianity are really two opposites? Communism teaches people to make demands; christianity teaches people to give; are they then not opposites?" His attitude towards the present status of society is further characterized by the following: "This universal war of all against all which you call society concerns me so little. I give Caesar what belongs to Caesar; and when it comes to sacrificing, even one's blood and life, the disciples of Christ lead; but the proper society will be established upon co-operation and peace, and not upon strife. And he who wants to reform society must begin with himself."

Naturally enough, 'practical' men with 'good common sense' call such ideas crazy, and predict the direst consequences from their adoption to culture and progress. But culture and progress seem to Garborg not unmixed blessings, nay at times they appear to him rather harmful than beneficial. "More and more I am inclined to believe," he writes in 1889, "that the invention of printing was a new fall of mankind, even worse than the original sin. This Johann Gensfleisch, Guttenberg, as they call him—I cannot think otherwise than that he was the Evil One himself, who came in a new guise and taught people to eat from the tree of knowledge again; he probably thought that he had not sufficiently ruined us the first time. But now he has accomplished it the much the better."—The enjoyment which Garborg finds in the simple rustic life at *Kolbotn* impresses him so strongly that culture pales in comparison. "Would you give me all the beautiful poetry which has ever been written in this world, from *Sakuntala* and *Kalevala* to Maeterlinck and Verlaine?", he addresses his friend.

“Poor fellow. If you have no more to give, go home and lie down; I shall not make a deal with you.”

But in moments of more sober judgment, he is less radical. Speaking of an able and prosperous farmer, he remarks: “In his spare hours, he likes to busy himself with books and reading. That is the kind of farmer of which we need many.” And yet this farmer is but an untutored man, and “he now sees that he may learn more by tilling the soil and that there may be more satisfaction in it than there probably is for most people in the grind of the school and the office.” In *Læraren*, Garborg extols a simple peasant as a true representative of real culture, not a culture created and acquired by him personally, but the result of the slow growth, attained and accumulated by the combined efforts of generations, the heritage of the past. Such, to be sure, is the nature of all culture, the unusual thing is that here it is attributed to the member of a class which ordinarily is considered as destitute of culture. Book learning does not lead to it. It even destroys our vision. In *Haugtussa*, we read:

Trollmann med eit Ris

Eg trollar i Haug dei leikande Smaa’
og klæd dei i Trælebroki;
naar ut dei kjem kann dei inkje sjaa;
eg batt dei for Augo med Boki.⁷

Here the reference is to the humble efforts of the young, the learned men and sages are infinitely worse. *I Helheim* harbors scholars and scientists who sought not the truth but honor and power, a reputation and a following. They are quarreling bitterly and endlessly over views and theories which they know to be sheer nonsense. Envy alone keeps them in the futile fray, for if one should desist, might not his opponent drape himself up as victor. The objection is, of course, valid that in hell we should expect to find the insincere. But Garborg seems to hold that it is difficult to find any honest ones, no

⁷ Goblin with a rod. / Into the hill I enchant the children small / and dress them in serfdom’s garb; / when out they come they can’t see at all; / up I tied their eyes with the book.

matter where we search for them. His estimate of the scholar is certainly not a high one. When, visiting his home parish, he stumbles upon a spick and span professor from Christiania, he thinks to himself: "The Lord only knows what such people like you and me are good for," and repeatedly he deplores the calling into which he has drifted. He is convinced that the preference for the learned professions is a most harmful tendency of our age. "But we are in period of decline. Many go to the dogs. It is expensive to live, people grow up at various schools; there they usually become soft and weak; in the end they are little able to toil and win their way to the fore. But a comfortable life is only for a few. And only a small number attain real power. It then goes, as it inevitably must: the rogues become derelicts."

Garborg sees some good in the agricultural schools, though as yet, they are better versed in foreign conditions than in the problems of their own country. And no one really learns farming there. Pupils from such schools ultimately have to learn from their parents, and indeed that which is of most importance. Schools are needed, but to be of real value, they must teach the pupils and students how to work.

The methods used in the education of children displease him greatly. The change from the itinerant schoolmaster to a fixed school with compulsory education seems to him a step in the wrong direction. "But now we have gotten these smart public schools. There the children have to sit and listen to some German theology and other deep matters, which they never get through their heads.

"These public schools are largely responsible for the fact that there is so little association between the children and the folk at home. At school a language entirely different from that at the command of the folk at home is used. And now there have sprung up so much responsibility and method about speaking to children. The parents have been deposed and the fourth commandment rescinded. Not being a parent, but having graduated from a normal school, gives one the right to speak to and instruct children."—Unfortunately the teacher remains often a stranger to the children, an overseer

placed there to exact from them the performance of certain tasks. His moral influence is therefore very small.

The purpose of the public schools, as they were in his youth, Garborg describes thus: "We were to be fitted for a place behind the counter (*Krambugutar*). Only those who were not intelligent enough were to stay at home and slave on the farm, if they could not manage to get to America." To be sure, that was many years ago, yet Garborg suggests that there has been but little improvement.

Much of Garborg's criticism of the machinery of state and the manner in which it functions pertains only to the conditions which existed in Norway two or three decades ago. The country was then but pasturage for officials (*Embattsmann-Beite*), and the officials he classes with the Finns and the tramps. They are all nomads. But some of his observations have a wider bearing and may well be applied to the present. "The state, which for a while was so omnipotent, has gotten more or less stuck now and is perceiving with surprise that it is the people who must support it, and that it is not the state which is supporting the people. Of the state, we need not expect a rain of manna. It was a mistaken notion, all this reliance on the state help. New taxes we may expect of the state with its annual budget of a hundred millions, and a debt of two or three hundred millions; and new loans is what we have to look for of the state. And continually new officials, who must be well supported, whoever else may be starving. That is the sole and only thing the state is able to accomplish: create new offices and pay and reward the officials and members of commissions. If one appeals to the state—and gets any reply at all, it is always one and the same: a certain number of new officials and commissions. . . . For to increase the power of bureaucracy is what they call promoting the welfare of the country—here in Norway."

All politics are a struggle for power and for the spoils, and an honest man should shun them. In *Uforsonlige* (Irreconcilables), Garborg has given us a satirical picture of the great game of politics; the press, this indispensable tool of all practical politicians, is included in the presentation. The above men-

tioned drama is the only work in this form and vein from the pen of Garborg. Naturally it reminds one of Ibsen and Bjørnson, but it is in every respect an independent work. Both the politicians and the press are depicted in a very repellent light. The press is characterized in a later production in the following manner: "When I take a newspaper into my hand, it is as if I came into a saloon. Each one is ranting about his own affairs. Some scold and fight, others gibe and laugh, still others are telling stories and slander, and deal in suspicions and vile language and the mongers and crooks brag and cheat. I hurry away from all this din and from the oppressive atmosphere; I become in it incapable of thinking and sully my soul."

Also the so-called non-partisan papers do but harm. "All sides of the question, free discussion. The largest assortment of opinions and views of life. Accursed are those editors who are interested in everything and stir it all into one mess, and give us three different views of life each day, and ten lies and twenty occurrences and accidents, but kill in us the ability to reflect. Go home to your business, my good fellow, and to your office and dole out your sensational morsels (*Sensations-drammer*), but let serious people alone."

Just as the different parties are primarily interested in the acquisition of power, so are the so-called liberals and champions of freedom only intent on liberty for themselves, but ever ready to deny it to their opponents. "Seven, eight years, I (Garborg) have wasted with the worst humbug, in order that the liberals might get into power. Well, when I trusted that I must be at least as free as before, to think and speak my mind, they put me out of office, because I had lived in conformance to paragraph 100 (which guarantees freedom of speech). You can go now, old man, don't you see that we have arrived—the liberals say." Garborg had at the time been removed from office, avowedly by reason of the supposed immoral tendency of his novel *Mannfolk*. He himself, however, did not regard the publication of this novel as the real cause of his removal. "No; but I had of late written various things about the administration of Sverdrup, and about the farmers and the clergymen allied with them in the legislature. . .

something to which I had a perfect right according to the constitution—and so they took my livelihood away from me.

“It was really very natural; why should they not do so? Why should they tolerate criticism, since the power was in their hands? There are, moreover, but few tyrants who tolerate criticism; so it was not to be expected that the liberals should put up with it, when the power was theirs.

“When politics some day become co-operation between brethren instead of war, then we can truthfully say that the people or the commonwealth rule, instead of Caesar or material power. May God grant that this day will arrive soon.”

Political parties are, however, not the actual rulers. “It is more and more getting to be mammon which rules, in the government of the state as well as elsewhere. Those who for the time being are in office are but his servants; but they cannot all hold office, all the time. *Baglar* and *Birkebeinar*⁸ are at war with each other. We are familiar with this, for this sort of war often sweeps over the country. Each group claims: the state is *we*; and the group which won last rules until the next feud. The spoils are distributed among the leading men of the party that won; people are taxed a little less at first, but later on commonly a little more.”

The principal and fundamental cause of all distress in the present day world, Garborg sees⁸ in the rule of mammon, i.e. capitalism.

Aldri som no
var den Vonde klok,
daa Mammon til fyrste
Tenar han tok.

Daa fyrst fekk han
Ovmagti rette,
daa Mammon til Jarl
paa Jord han sette.

⁸ *Baglar*, from *baculus*, crosier. *Birkebeinar*, because they had to use birch-bark for foot-wear. Political parties that originated in the second half of the twelfth century.

I Verdi no
 hev Mammon Styre
 meir enn sjølve
 dei store Dyre.⁹

A sinister monster he is that feeds on the blood and marrow of human beings. And yet wealth does not even bring happiness to those that own and control it. "Usually a rich man ends in despair; he becomes weary of his own self and his very existence. The millionaires who roam through all the world and vainly attempt to lull to sleep tormenting recollections can bear witness to this; and similarly those who cheat on a gigantic scale, and who patch up their suffering consciences by gifts to churches, and poor houses, and what not. But honestly won and properly used wealth is a blessing of God."

Unfortunately wealth of this kind is rarely found, and for this reason capitalism as an institution is harmful. To the argument that wealth is a necessary presupposition for the attainment and preservation of culture, Paul Høve replies that there should be an abundance of wealth for the promotion of true culture, if there were no longer any idlers and all were contented to live frugal lives. His brother Gunnar, the matter-of-fact businessman comments on the entire situation as follows: "My brother is preaching christianity, and in the foreign countries they are preaching revolution; one is just as hopeless as the other.

"The world does not budge from its course. Might rules, and might is *money*. We can curse this hell created by capitalism, but we shall not extinguish it. Least of all with petroleum.

"Uprisings simply strengthen those in power; teach them to be on their guard. Revolution does not end slavery, gives it only a new name and new garb; afterwards conditions are even worse instead of better.

"The old serfs had each his master to fall back upon. And the master could oppress them or starve them; but such did not pay; to starve a serf was as unwise as it is to starve a horse.

⁹ Never as wise / was Satan as now, / when mammon he made / of his servants the first. / Only now he obtained / supremacy real, / when mammon he placed / to govern the world. / Now in this world / mammon does rule / more potently he / than the men of might.

The serfs were given enough to get along with; often they got along well.

"Now it is worse. The serfs are free; that is to say: without masters; that is without any one to defend them and answer for them. The masters are free from any responsibility as before, and into the bargain also free from the old business obligation. They use serfs when they need them, and when they are done with them they kick them out. And the serfs must be glad if they earn enough to keep body and soul together.

"Now the workers begin to understand that they must stand by each other. And if they hold together well, both against their masters and the crowds that are starving, then they can keep wages high nicely—when the times are good. But the larger the wages are, the sooner hard times come, and with these unemployment. And now the masters on their part are also learning to stand by each other.

"It is uncanny at times; new revolutions seem to be brewing. But the power is on the side of money. Socialists and anarchists may have powder and dynamite; but the christian commonwealth has more powder and dynamite, and, into the bargain, men who have been trained in the use of powder and dynamite; with a few cannon, they can in an hour's time turn the largest manufacturing city into hash."

Garborg himself is a pacifist, opposed to the use of force on principle, regardless of the question of expedience. But a few stray remarks would seem to indicate that he under certain circumstances would consider the use of force justifiable or admissible. They reveal the point where Garborg's pacifism, like that of all the rest, no longer can stand the strain and breaks down.

At one time, he saw some hope in socialism, but later he looks upon it with distrust. "I have busied myself a great deal with socialism and anarchism," he states, "and there is much in them which seems hopeful. Especially in anarchism, which is the same as the absence of government, complete self-government; socialism, or the rule of the people, I am afraid, would beget a whole lot of governmental control. But however

this may be: all such scientific and wise solutions are a long ways off, and meanwhile people are starving to death every day."

One of the features of modern economic life which our author laments again and again is that the very soil has become an article of commerce, and he believes that the reforms advocated by Henry George in his "Social Problems" would remedy the situation. Garborg apparently was under the impression that the ideas of Henry George had gained considerable ground here in America.

In regard to the usefulness of mental labor, or rather of purely intellectual pursuits, his attitude approaches that of Tolstoi, although he does not go to the same extremes. In the *Knudatheibrev* dated June 24, 1902 and addressed to one Steinar, Garborg professes scruples because of his unproductive life and, anticipating the objections of his friend, argues with himself in this manner:

"Yes, but I am working, too, in a manner?—Bosh, is this work? It should be nothing but recreation for one's spare time.—Yes, but then the product is always accordingly.—It then turns out best; and it does not matter, anyhow; we have books enough.—Yes but I surely do as much good as the average Peter or Paul in some government office (*Partements-Lars*)?—Yes, but then people simply could heave Peter and Paul, and me, too, upon the dung heap." He, to be sure, admits that it is the ceaseless, drizzling rain which makes him so philosophical; but he has elsewhere and when not under the spell of a pessimistic mood, expressed the same thought repeatedly, though perhaps less emphatically. All the purely practical suggestions which he makes with reference to the badly needed reforms insist on a return to a simpler, more primitive mode of life. They may be summed up in the slogan: "Back to the farm!" The *Kolbotn* experiment, and residence in his summer home in *Jæderen* constitute efforts of Garborg to achieve this simplicity for himself.

For one of the most modern movements, the women movement, Garborg has but little sympathy. In *Hjaa ho Mor*, *Mannfolk*, and *Trætte Mænd*, the striving of women for their

so-called emancipation is satirized. But here it must be remembered that Garborg did not necessarily share the views which he attributed to his characters. Since the whole movement in many cases was accompanied by a strong preference for mental work and aversion for all manual labor, Garborg was bound to view it with disfavor. The problem, moreover, requires in his opinion no special attention; it will be solved, like all the rest, by obedience to the teachings of Christ.

Despite his dissatisfaction with the conditions of the present, Garborg is hopeful for the future, though he is too clear-sighted to believe that a change for the better is near at hand. And yet, the seed is already sown and has sprung up and taken root; in due time it will mature.

Men midt i den m ddde
Mannaheimen
fritt lever
Freds Rike;
aukande daa,
naar det andre minkar,
sterkt ved ein C sar
du seint skynar,
han som mot vondt
vin med godt
og Verdi tok
med Teikne dette¹⁰

An idealist though adverse to the use of high-sounding rhetoric, a christian but not a churchman or moralist, a revolutionary though opposed to the use of force for the attainment of any, even the noblest ends, such appears Arne Garborg in his works. His practical teachings are few and simple: unselfishness, industriousness and simplicity are the guiding principles. The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men is his all embracing message.

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¹⁰ But in the midst of the world / weary of strive / there exists / the kingdom of peace; / augmenting ever / while the others wane, / strong in a ruler / you at last understand, / who the evil / conquers with good / and masters the world / by the sign of the Cross.